



# NOTES FROM THE:

## Air Force Accounting and Finance Office

by Colonel Martha M. Beatty

Congratulations to all the FM nominees and winners! I had the opportunity to sit on two panels this year and was impressed with the quality of folks we have working the very tough issues. One of the common traits I saw among all the nominees was people leaning forward to do more than just their job. That's what it takes. This quarter's article talks to just that...stepping out from behind the desk...getting involved where it may not be strictly your job...and partnering for success!

The AFAFO has been in existence for 18 months. Initially our belief was that we needed to partner with DFAS and the MAJCOMs on FSO operational procedures. What we've learned is that we still need to get out from behind our desks, we still need to get involved where it is not strictly our job, and that partnering for success really works!

Take military pay, for example. Technically, much of the work flows from military personnel offices to DFAS without touching the customer service area of the FSO. And yet when entitlements don't hit, who takes the flak? It falls right back in the laps of the FSO. To resolve these problems, we've initiated a quarterly working group with AF/DP, AFPC, DFAS, and SAF/FM. The purpose is to enhance the communication between all the players and make sure entitlements AF/DP signs up to can be paid either through the system or manual work arounds. Simple communication errors between DFAS and AFPC set off a myriad of delays in payment of initial enlistment bonuses last year!

Bases can use this same logic to prevent problems from arising at base level. When was the last time the FSO and MPF Chief or Housing Officer of Flight Management Officer sat down to discuss issues? If it has been more than three months, you are putting your customers in jeopardy of a late payment. Often, these offices assume we can simply process their requests and we all get too busy to sit down and strategize the best process.

Another example is the recent implementation of mandatory EFT and Central Contract registration for vendors. While strictly speaking this issue was between the Contracting arena and DFAS, who gets hammered

when vendors don't get paid. By working closely with DFAS and SAF/AQ, we were prepared when Secretary Lynn mandated implementation of the 1996 Act. His memo of 30 December 1999 required OSD and DFAS to begin returning contracts and invoices 1 February 2000. DFAS Headquarters provided implementing instructions on 27 January 2000. The Denver network and SAF/AQ had already been talking about the possibility of a 20 to 30% reject rate. Immediately, SAF/AQ went into action to mandate that the field clean up their databases and bring on those vendors not complying with the law. In addition, the AFAFO and SAF/AQ worked with the Denver network to ensure the implementing instructions sent to the network made sense and that DFAS take a hard look at the clauses and requirements before returning an invoice. While not perfect, the rate of return for invoices was much less than the train wreck first envisioned. The other Services were not as involved and fared much worse.

Nearly all the FSO nominees and award winners embraced this same principle. Those with the lowest interest costs stepped away from their desks and found ways to reduce Air Force caused interest by working with contracting and chasing receiving reports. Others worked with commanders and resource advisors to deobligate excess funds for critically needed programs. As a result, they partnered for enhanced mission success.

What can you do to enhance your own mission success? Stay involved. At the MAJCOM-level, continue the communication with your counterparts in transportation, contracting, and personnel. When our representative to PDTATAC asks for coordination of suggested changes to the Joint Travel Regulations, look at them carefully. Too often our policy makers don't have the perspective you do. At the base-level, lean forward and talk to your customers and those offices that impact pay. Be involved in IPT processes, which uses a cross-functional approach, to solve common problems.

I'm looking forward next year to seeing your name among the very best in the Air Force!

